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FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0900
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000263

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TAGS: PREL PGOV SR SU RU LO

SUBJECT: PM FICO DISCUSSES SUDAN, KOSOVO, ENERGY AND MD

REF: STATE 51828

Classified By: Ambassador Vallee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. During a May 3 breakfast, PM Robert Fico assured Slovakia will vote with the EU on Kosovo in the UNSC; reiterated his personal opposition to U.S. Missile Defense plans and advocated more dialogue with Russia and within the EU; reacted favorably to the possibility of sending military observers to Sudan (reftel) and commented at length on national and coalition politics. Fico will make an official visit to Moscow on May 4. End summary.

KOSOVO

12. (C) Fico reiterated his support for FM Kubis on the Kosovo issue and said Slovakia will be with Europe at the UN. Fico was initially worried that former PM Dzurinda was onto a potent political issue when he raised the issue in Parliament. Fico commissioned a poll and found that only 8 percent of Slovaks feel strongly about the Kosovo issue. (Comment. This fits with Post's oft-stated premise that Fico's positions owe more to polls than principles. End comment.)

13. (C) The Ambassador said the U.S. intended to consult early with Slovakia on the drafting of a resolution, with an aim to considering Slovak suggestions that would give Fico and Kubis political cover at home. Fico was extremely appreciative and said such consultations would be very important.

MISSILE DEFENSE

14. (C) Fico repeated that he would never allow MD assets in Slovakia, but stressed that this is his personally-held opinion and not the policy of his government. Fico pointed out that publicly he has said the Czechs and Poles are sovereign countries and can make their own decisions. Fico was surprised in their bilateral meeting by German Chancellor Merkel's strong views on this issue, and described his views as in lock step with Merkel's. The Ambassador cautioned Fico that any photo op condemning MD during his May 4 trip to Moscow would be unfortunate. Fico replied that FM "Kubis is very nervous about what I will say," but that he would limit any comments to a call for more dialogue with Russia and the EU.

SUDAN

15. (SBU) The PM responded positively to reftel points, and is willing to consider deploying military observers and/or police. Fico noted his long-standing outspokenness on issues of genocide. Having received the PM's imprimatur, Post will follow-up with DefMin Kasicky.

ENERGY SECURITY

16. (C) The Ambassador pointed out that if there was ever an example of the need for energy diversity it is the situation in Estonia, where the Russians are clearly playing the energy card for political purposes. Fico complained that fellow Europeans don't understand what it is like to be 100 percent dependent on Russia for gas. Slovakia must have "standard" relations with Russia to preserve cooperative energy dealings, but is still completely committed to NATO and the EU. Remarkably, Transpetrol is not to be on Fico's formal agenda for his meeting with Putin. Fico said EconMin Jahnatek, who is accompanying the PM, may discuss it with his Ministry-level contacts in separate meetings. The Ambassador encouraged Fico to add Transpetrol to his own agenda, saying that only a Slovak purchase of the pipeline could bridge the differences between the Russian and Dutch courts.

17. (SBU) The Ambassador praised the PM for his efforts to promote nuclear energy, but warned that for the VVER-type reactor, Russia would become the only source of nuclear fuel if Westinghouse does not secure the additional contracts it needs to remain in the market.

MECIAR AND THE SLOVAK INFORMATION SERVICE

18. (C) The Ambassador noted our respect for Slovak Information (Intelligence) Service (SIS) Chief Magala and inquired about HzDS Chief and coalition partner Vladimir Meciar's insistence on his party's right to name a deputy. The PM noted that Meciar is much reduced in his vigor and ability to intrigue since his recent heart surgery, suggesting that it may have been a life changing experience. Fico said Meciar may now be focused on what to do with "all that money he has." Fico said Meciar does, however, still have his heart in the SIS deputy fight and has threatened to hold up key legislation unless he gets the nominee.

19. (C) In response to the Ambassador's observation that Magala is firmly opposed to a HzDS nominated deputy, Fico noted Magala is "one tough guy", who is frustrated that Fico does not pay more attention to SIS. Quoting a Slovak proverb "what guns we use can be used against us," Fico said the less he was involved in SIS the better. For now Fico plans to deal with the irreconcilable differences between Meciar and Magala by stalling, at least until after the HZDS leadership contest in June.

110. (C) A suggestion by Milan Urbani, vice-chairman of HzDS, to the Ambassador that Meciar might give up the SIS slot in exchange for something else was, according to Fico, made without the backing of Meciar, who listens to nobody but himself.

HZDS LEADERSHIP CONTEST

111. (C) Fico said Meciar is very nervous about the challenge to his leadership coming from vice-chairman Viliam Vetteska. (Septel) The SIS appointment request was reiterated recently by Meciar, who told Fico straight out he needs the appointment to strengthen himself against Vetteska. Fico said it was the only time he had seen Meciar confide weakness. Fico still believes Meciar will win, but only by 60-40, and only because of HZDS' sympathy for Meciar's medical condition. Otherwise Vetteska would win, particularly if there were a secret ballot.

CUBAN REFUGEES

112. (SBU) The Ambassador thanked Fico for agreeing to accept eight Cuban refugees. The PM acknowledged Interior Minister Kalinak's enthusiasm for the request.

VALLEE